

Remarks

The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and that the case pass to issue in light of the remarks below.

In the Office Action mailed November 18, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 1-6, 8-9, 11-15 and 17-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by JP 2002102957A to Uchida (hereinafter the Uchida patent), and further claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Uchida in view of USPN 6,477,879 to Sawa (hereinafter the Sawa patent). Enclosed herewith is a declaration from each inventor to establish actual reduction to practice prior to the April 9, 2002, publication of Uchida. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that the Uchida reference is an invalid source of prior art, and thus the rejection to claims 1-6, 8-9, 11-15 and 17-18 are obviated. In addition, with respect to the § 103 rejection to claim 16, Applicants submit that claim 16 is allowable because the Sawa patent cannot be properly combined with Uchida.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejections and that the case pass to issue.

Respectfully submitted,
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